THE CHURCH, THE UNIVERSITY AND URBAN SOCIETY: FOCUS ON THE CHURCH

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Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies
Washington, D. C.

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PREFACE

As one of these essays indicates, a project on "Church, University and Urban Society" calls to mind the classic question, "Define the universe and give two examples." The size of the subject is matched by the variety of responses which colleges, universities, and churches have been making in recent years to the urban scene, and by the urgency, not always supported by clear directions, which they have felt seeking to confront the pressures and demands of urban America.

The Department of Higher Education of the National Council of Churches, together with the boards of higher education of a number of denominations, came to believe in the late 1960's that the problems of urban society were some of the important intersections of common concern between church and university.

The Department was pleased, therefore, to receive in early 1969 a substantial grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation which was joined with special funds from church agencies, both in higher education and national missions, for a two-year action-research project on "Church, University and Urban Society." Defining the issues has been a continuing task of the study itself, as will be seen in these reports, but the basic purpose of the project was to discover ways in which to increase the capacity and the commitment of churches and academic institutions to meet the problems of urban society.

The project was carried on from mid-1969 to mid-1971 by two able sociologists, Dr. Elden E. Jacobson and Dr. Parker J. Palmer, Senior Associates in the Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies, Washington, D. C. Dr. Jacobson received his Ph.D. in the sociology of religion in 1966 from Yale University and Dr. Palmer received his in sociology in 1970 from the University of California at Berkeley. Both men had research and teaching experience before coming to the Washington Center and both participated in the comprehensive Danforth Study of Campus Ministries, undertaken by the

late Kenneth Underwood and published under the title, The Church, the University, and Social Policy (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1969).

Elden Jacobson and Parker Palmer were eminently qualified for this current study by their academic training and their search for new styles of professional life, by their religious commitment and their search for new modes of corporate religious responsibility. The Department of Higher Education is deeply grateful to them for the imagination and insight they have brought to this undertaking. We are particularly pleased that the ideas and styles they have developed in this project will receive a continuing embodiment in a new center to which they will be attached, the Institute for Public Life in Silver Spring, Maryland.

The following persons served on an Advisory Commission to the "Church, University and Urban Society" project:

Morris T. Keeton, Vice-President of Antioch College, Chairman
Edwin G. Bennett, National Staff, Team for Ministry in Higher Education, Episcopal Church
William Cannon, Vice-President for Programs and Projects, University of Chicago
Harvey Cox, Associate Professor, Church and Society, Harvard Divinity School
Charles W. Doak, Campus Minister, University of California at Los Angeles
Brooks Hays, Director of Ecumenical Studies, Wake Forest University, former Congressman from Arkansas
John Jordan, Executive Secretary, Office of University World, National Division, Board of Missions of the United Methodist Church
Arthur Paris, Graduate Student in Sociology, Northwestern University
Hans B. C. Spiegel, Professor of Urban Affairs, Hunter College of the City University of New York
George Todd, Associate for Urban and Industrial Ministries (Board of National Missions), and Secretary, Joint Office of Urban and Industrial Ministries (with COEMAR), United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.
Charles Z. Wilson, Jr., Assistant Vice-Chancellor for Educational Planning and Program, University of California at Los Angeles

The Department of Higher Education is indebted to Dr. Morris Keeton, chairman, and all the members of this Commission for the time they gave to meetings and occasional special assignments, and for the advice and interaction of ideas they afforded the staff throughout the project.

It will be understood that the freedom of the staff, Elden Jacobson and Parker Palmer, is enhanced by issuing these reports over their own names. They do not necessarily express the views either of the Advisory Commission or the Department of Higher Education.

The Department expresses its gratitude to the Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies for making possible the services of the staff, to the Sloan Foundation and church agencies for providing financial support, and again to Messrs. Jacobson and Palmer for giving themselves so generously to it.

William N. Lovell
Executive Director
Department of Higher Education
National Council of Churches

INTRODUCTION

Church-University-Urban Society. Such is the fashion--old coin for academic and theologian alike--by which our pretensions exceed our reach. This booklet, one of seven in a series, is the work of two academic sociologists, invited by the Department of Higher Education, National Council of Churches, to investigate the marvelous amorphousness this project's title suggests. For two years we have invested nearly all of our professional interest and time, and a good bit privately, in exploring these three ideas--two institutions and a given context--both as separate, identifiable foci of curiosity and as interacting social institutions in this society's increasingly urbanized work and life.

The style has been activist; we have not hesitated to intervene when invited to do so, and we have likewise set into motion a variety of projects in which all involved were self-consciously pressing for more-adequate ways of "getting it together." So it is, we argue, that one learns.

The possibilities, of course, were overwhelming; our response partial and uneven. Yet it is not mere modesty or a sense of caution that leads us to say so. This project was originally but one of six major, interrelated inquiries conceived in 1968 by nationally known academics and churchmen, inquiries that spanned quite nearly the whole of higher education. Yet the practical realities--of time and money and political power --were such that only some parts survived, this one funded at one-eighth the amount initially sought. An instructive process, to be sure, one depressingly illustrative of the usual manner this society seems bent upon confronting the demonic forces now corroding its inward parts, wherein the grandeur of purpose seems dramatically at odds with achieved result. We mean no disrespect to our immediate sponsors; on the contrary, the Department of Higher Education, and our parent institution, the Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies, have shared with us that extra mile in amazingly good grace. But the lack of careful, sophisticated, thoughtful

experimentation with new forms and new potentials within both church and university is dispiritingly evident to those who have looked. This society's capacity for selective inattention seems scarcely capable of overstatement.

Yet straws there are--often laden with rhetoric and self-protection--but straws none-the-less. And it is those straws that commanded our greater attention as they, first in fact were and are, and as, secondly, situations that hold wider promise. As the briefest of introductions to these seven papers, the following descriptive statements are offered to the reader:

1. The Church, the University and Urban Society: A Problem in Power.
   In this essay, we describe the basic conceptual focus and theoretical framework of the two-year project. Urban society is defined in terms of power, and the role of church and university in it is viewed as essentially marginal unless and until they enter at the point of power. Varieties of power are assayed and strategies for their use are discussed. The essay forms a backdrop for much we have written elsewhere in this series.

2. The Church, the University and Urban Society: Focus on the Church.
   This essay focuses the general concerns of the project on the church. In it, we are particularly concerned with the parish or congregation, that much-neglected but essential component of the church at large. We also explore some of the problems inherent in the specialized ministries (particularly campus and urban), national offices and agencies, and the seminaries.

3. The Church, the University and Urban Society: Implications for the University.
   This essay explores the conceptual, that is to say, the disciplinary, basis of the modern university. In it we conclude that the changing nature of social reality is increasingly undermining fragmented disciplinary inquiry, which in turn is and will continue

to constitute the universities' real "irrelevance." Because we see no grounds for believing that it will fundamentally re-order itself, alternatives to the university will be, and are being, created.

4. The Power of Development: Some Possibilities We See.
This is an analysis, from our experience, of middle- and upper-middle-class suburban life, and the crisis of authority now endemic within social institutions--with emphasis upon the church --that purport to serve this society. We believe these two phenomena are closely related and that church bureaucrats have not been particularly imaginative in their treatment of either. The question of "development" is explored as one partial means of rethinking national/local relationships.

5. Urban Curricula and the Liberal Arts College.
This is a report of our examination of the liberal arts colleges' response to things "urban," with particular attention to "urban semester" programs and their conceptual and practical weaknesses. Drawing sharp distinctions between universities and colleges, we have tried to suggest alternative ways for addressing what is surely a critical dimension of modern society; the focus now upon the role of "citizen" and "social invention." We have also commented at length on the academic politics of getting from here to there.

6. Action-Research: A New Style of Politics, Education and Ministry.
In this manual, we describe a basic methodology of the project, "action-research." The essay is of the "how to do it" breed, with a detailed description of the stages in an action-research project, some of the basic research tools and suggestions regarding organization. Action-research, in which research is conceived as a process of political action, has demonstrated its utility as a training device for professionals and students and as an organization tool for citizen's groups wishing to make an impact in their community.

7. The Public Life: Its Decline and Renewal.
This final essay in the series articulates our concern for the "public life" in the context of church, university and urban society. For us, the public life involves not only traditional political institutions and processes, but the emerging options to them. We discuss the question of options as a critical one, given the crisis of contemporary life and politics. This essay also has a strong "how to do it" dimension in its description of one of the field experiments which continue beyond the life of the larger project--the Institute for Public Life. It is in the Institute that we continue to act out the implications of our two-year effort for the National Council of Churches.

As with these seven essays so, too, with the project itself: they emerge from two persons whose unity of purpose and mutuality of spirit have come to constitute unique experiences for us both. Written words, self-evidently, must finally derive from a single pen and for the sake of form, names appear on each title page with the principal writer cited first. Authorship, however, is fully shared--in concept, result, and intensity of feeling--and we make no distinctions in our defense of and responsibility for the whole of this series.

Each essay has been written to stand largely on its own merits; as such, repetition occurs from time to time, from one piece to the others. We trust it will not distract the carefully attentive reader.

We warmly acknowledge our considerable indebtedness to the Reverend William N. Lovell, Director of the Department of Higher Education, and Dr. Royce Hanson, President of the Washington Center. Both of these men were very supportive without imposing direction, and we moved with complete freedom in the shaping of this inquiry of involvement. We wish also to thank the members of our Advisory Commission; despite the inadequacies of this particular form of securing advice and assistance, several

of these men served both us and the people we studied in exemplary fashion. We likewise thank that multitude of people who literally reside from coast to coast within those situations we discuss. They have taught us much, and are thereby responsible, to a most considerable degree, for whatever merit our writings contain.

All deficiencies of analysis and interpretation are, of course, ours alone.

Elden E. Jacobson and Parker J. Palmer
Washington, D. C.
June, 1971

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I. INTRODUCTION

In this series of seven pamphlets on "the church, the university and urban society" we have devoted one pamphlet to each of the three major terms of our title. This one is on the church. It will not differ from the others in basic themes, but rather in the perspective from which it is written--the perspective of churchmen, rather than urbanologists or members of the university. We hope here to speak to an audience which is concerned about the church, even though it may have little interest in the university, or even in urban society.

We can let no more than one paragraph go by before pointing to the illusory quality of that word "church." For the word suggests a monolith which does not exist in practice. We have no doubt that there is a mystic unity to the church; nor do we doubt that such a unity has important consequences for the parts of the body. But on the empirical level, the body does have parts. While the parts may work together, they may still require different kinds of care. And it is conceivable that the body is in such a state of ill-health that the parts do not work together, that there has been a general breakdown of coordination.

Whatever image you choose, it is not difficult to agree on some of the major parts of "the church." We will concentrate first on the local parish which has alternately been despised, disdained and ignored in latter-day efforts at social mission. (The consequences of this, of course, have reverberated throughout the body of the church--evidence, perhaps, that the parts still relate to one another, albeit tensely.) Then we will turn our attention to the specialized ministries of the church; in particular, and for obvious reasons, the campus ministry and the urban ministries. Third we will inspect the role and function of the national offices of the church, especially as they relate to local expressions of the church. Finally, we will turn our attention to the seminaries as an agency of the church--a critical agency, through which much of the church's leadership flows and is filtered.

Our thesis, again, is "power." We have asserted that the city is defined by power in its various modes: historical, sociological, political and individual. We have suggested that church and university will relate to the city only marginally unless they can overcome their historic tendency to define themselves above, beyond, beneath or without power. The phrase "the church, the university and urban society" can begin to make sense only as church and university define and mobilize their own powers in the urban context. Our goal for power, and the power process itself, we have described in terms of "pluralism." Our concern is that church and university help rectify imbalances and maldistributions of power so that democracy and diversity will at least be given a test.

To say that the church has not understood itself in terms of power is, obviously, to make a crude generalization. For some of the dominant strands of American theology have insisted upon the church's role in an ambiguous, political world--especially those strands woven together in the fabric of neo-orthodox theology. However, the fact that the once handsome coat of neo-orthodoxy has now grown threadbare attests to the persistence of the theme of powerlessness. After the social action traumas of the sixties, many proponents of power are now turning their heads towards new lights and sounds, signified by words like "celebration," "awareness," and "the dance."

In the face of this, how can we continue to push for power? There are those in the church who have pushed this thesis with honesty and vigor over the past few years. They have understood the church's powers and have tried to use them on behalf of the powerless. It may surprise them that we are pushing what looks like "the same old theme," for the decade's experience in power-oriented church social action has not been a happy one. Not only is there reason to doubt that the external impact of the church has been substantial, there is good reason to believe that the internal impact of these efforts has been disastrous. We write at a moment when church budgets, staff and programs are being cut and then cut again due in

part to the reaction of the rank-and-file ecclesiastical forays into politics.

It would be naive of us to ignore these facts; it would also be naive of the reader to treat our power thesis as if it were of one cloth with every other approach to power. For we want to argue that the church of the sixties was characterized not only by the use of power, but also by the misuse of power; it was this misuse, rather than the concern for power per se, that led the church into its current dilemmas.

To speak of the misuse of power clearly implies some normative model. We have such a model (it will be revealed throughout this essay) and we suggest that the lack of same is at the bottom of the church's problems with power. To use a phrase from Philip Selznick, we believe that the church has proceeded without an adequate model of its "distinctive institutional competence." To inquire after such competence, we have to know something of the "nature" of the church; this means knowing something of its institutional limits and potentials. Only by answering such questions can we move with institutional integrity, as opposed to coating the institution with a veneer of "purpose" and "mission" which have no relation to its inner structure.

These concerns are especially pressing with reference to the theme of power, for an interest in power is apt to become so generalized and diffuse that the "distinctive competence" of an institution is ignored. To be alive, to be part of creation, is to have powers. But which powers are strongest, which most appropriate, and which when exercised will tend toward the maturing of the organism--these are not questions easily answered when we are satisfied with any old show of power. We suggest that something of this neglect was at work during the power exercises of the sixties, and that it has manifested itself in the current crises of the church. In particular, the power orientation of the last decade has left the typical church member well behind; and that psychic distance has

been transmuted into sullen withdrawal or anger. Nearly 60% of church members interviewed in a recent poll indicated that they disapproved of the church's involvement on various social fronts, including the "urban crisis."

We will not, at this point, reveal in one sentence of breathtaking insight what the church's distinctive competence actually is. Much as we would like to, and much as the reader may insist, we must weave whatever insight we have on that matter into all the pages that follow--especially because the competences of the body vary from part to part. We have written about distinctive competence in a general way only to alert the reader that throughout what follows we will be seeking clues to that mystery.

At least a part of the task has already been done for us: we have, in the last decade, learned a good deal about the conditions under which the church will break. We now have much to learn about the conditions under which the church's nature can be recognized, harmonized and utilized. Thus, while we use the rhetoric of power, we have in mind some different applications than those we grew accustomed to during the sixties.

What has all of this got to do with "the university and urban society"? Various linkages will be made as this essay moves along, but one very basic and general point can be made at the outset.

We are concerned about political reaction and "backlash" in the church, not only in and of itself, but also for what it reveals about the church's distinctive nature. We think it is possible to identify a gestalt against which that backlash has been directed, a gestalt whose elements are Black-urban-campus-youth, with any one of the elements being interchangeable for any other. If we are correct, then this gestalt has serious implications for the response of churchmen to both the university and the city. And this essay has a strong rationale for the themes around which it is built.

II. THE PARISH CHURCH

The issues discussed above have to do with relations between all parts of the church, but they come to roost with special force in the parish. Not only is the parish the locus of the vast majority of Christian people, the parish also pays the bills. With declining church membership and general inflation, it is not surprising that some vitriol should be expended on creditors whose products parishioners did not really want to buy. Social actionists have probably egoistically assumed too much of the responsibility for the churches' people/dollar crisis, but there is surely a relation between the social action style of the sixties and the apparent retrenchment of the seventies.

The parish, in this regard, is at a critical juncture in its history. It is still a remarkably diverse group of people whose bonds remain visible but are growing more tenuous. The choices we make about strategies of social action and mission will determine whether those bonds are strengthened or severed. And that, in turn, will determine the limits on the church's power in the larger social context. It may well be the church's task to crucify its body on the cross of world-wide justice. But if we are to do so, let us do it in the name and grace of God, not of some myopic view of social action.

Let us consider the range of options facing the parish in the area of social action. One of the most prevalent during the sixties was the tacit hope of "bringing the church along whole." That is, men of conscience in the church would exercise their conscience by confronting the whole church with an issue. In typical confrontation fashion, they would demand a yea or a nay from those being confronted, insisting all the while that membership in the church was consistent with only one of those two options.

The logic of this stand is unassailable, especially when one buys the particular conjunction of faith and social commitment. But human action is always more than logic, and in this case the empirical result was often the splitting of a church. The imagery of "splitting a church" can arouse a companion image of sadness over the divorce or of tough-minded gladness that the men have been separated from the boys. But the issue is too important to rest on simple imagery, so let us pursue it a bit.

The church may, because of its recent history, be moving toward smaller, more cadre-like units. Just because they are small does not mean they are weak; indeed, one writer has called such units "organizational weapons," suggesting the increased power (of a certain sort) the church may derive from them. Such units have a high degree of political efficiency; for their members, the way is indeed narrow and the path straight. There is a tendency for membership in them to be defined around political, not theological, concerns, and the normal fuzziness of religious rhetoric is replaced with a more precise, task-oriented political vocabulary. If this is the sort of church, and the sort of power, we want then "bringing the church along whole" is the approach we need. For this tactic will almost inevitably fragment the church into cadre-like splinters.

If this is what we want . . . a critical question which can be answered only in terms of "distinctive institutional competence." And our hunch is that there are other organizations more competent to follow the cadre approach; for example, political parties. The church is now and generally has been a mass-membership organization. Its theological premises for membership allow for a wide diversity of social and political locations, to say nothing of social and political beliefs. That is not a normative statement but a descriptive one. What the church does with that descriptive fact is what counts, and we are not at all sure that carving it down to cadre size is the best stewardship of institutional resources.

That there is power in tight-knit cadres is not in question. But there are other types, styles and contexts of power in the mass-membership church we still have today. Indeed, in a society increasingly characterized by institutional narrowness and specialization, there may be a special raison d'être, even a political one, for the cultivation and protection of a last bastion of heterogeneity. Perhaps this is a relatively short-term need, of one or two generations, after which the narrow specializations of social institutions will have been effectively challenged by a more diffuse and wholistic life-style. But for the moment it remains a critical problem.

If social institutions are increasingly pulling people out of community, political or otherwise, into narrow functional specializations, then there is a special role and special potential for an organization which has the capacity to remain open and pluralistic. We shall argue later that the church is already more this way than many understand, but for the moment let us simply state it as an important objective for the future.

A second option for social action involves the creation of action units only loosely related to the church itself. These "spinoffs" can embody all the virtues of cadres without leading the whole church along that path; they can also benefit from the tacit support of the church, at least in their beginning phase. One place where this approach has been used rather widely is in community organization. Here the church will develop a front organization to receive monies for organizational staff and programs, a front which is structurally unrelated to the churches and on whose board sit people who have no connection with the churches. The rationale for such an approach is that community organization can thus be in, of and for the community; that by inserting an indepeendent front between themselves and the community the churches can gain no control.

True enough. But it is also true that the use of a front organization protects the churches from full implication in the fray. When the action gets heavy the churches can always claim innocence. This is not

necessarily a bad thing. But it certainly means that whenever this mode of organization is adopted, the church is unlikely to be confronted with hard questions involving its own stake in the problem and its own capacity to respond.

To put the matter in other language, this mode of social action evades the question of distinctive institutional competence. The creation of "spin-offs" is no special competence of the church. And once it is done, the church is out from under pressures which might help it learn about its limits and potentials.

Our normative model of the parish church suggests that it is a community of people, one of whose strengths lies in its potential for living together under duress. That may sound like a terribly utopian proposition until we realize that many parishes have been doing just that for several years. The duress under which they have been living has not been of noble proportions; much of it has been petty, bigoted and trivial. But that, of course, is the scale of much "life together" and we need to be able to celebrate our capacity to live it. The "spin-off" model does not take this capacity seriously; it creates life outside the bounds of the parish and leaves nothing but slow death for inside.

These reflections lead us to a third model of social action in the parish church, one which does take life together seriously. Surely the church must facilitate the inclinations of those already inclined toward social action; we do not want to enter a new era in which these people become the new disenfranchised much as their inactive counterparts were in years past. But the church must also attend to the needs of those who cannot cope with social change, let alone take personal action. And above all, the church must publicly experiment with ways of helping these two groups lead a life together. For in so doing the church will provide a model in microcosm for the society.

Let us explore the problem of those who cannot cope with change. If we know anything about the pathologies of twentieth century politics, we know that they stem from the power of frightened people. Our churches are full of such people, and we have done little except exacerbate their fears.

This is partly because those with social consciences have never been able to take seriously the fearful among them. Their problems have seemed far less pressing than the direct problems of those who are the victims of injustice. And yet ministering to the fearful is a task of great political consequence. The question is not, as a recent book suggests, "to comfort or to challenge," as if challenge were the only responsible (perhaps virile) stance. No, comfort is a politically relevant task and social action in the church must understand that.

There may be an important reason why this fact has not been understood and is not likely to be. Social actionists have brought to their work a pressing awareness of sin which has often been transformed into a kind of quasi-Christian fatalism, a fatalism which suggests that nothing can be done, but one must still do something. We sometimes wonder whether social action in the church has taken its present form because it thus produces so much data which confirm the fatalistic premise. That is, the church's social action has sometimes had the nature of a self-fulfilling prophecy. We began with the assumption that "all those people" were intractable racists (to take but one example) and their reactions to our programs proved it! This is no small matter, for there is always more satisfaction in confirming one's world-view than in making something change and thus having to modify a basic belief.

One way to help bring together the divided brethren would be to persuade the actionists that dealing with the sources and consequences of political reaction is a major task on the "liberal" agenda. For some years the liberal has been looking exclusively to the poor, the Black and the otherwise disenfranchised as the focus of his work. Recently, these

groups have been telling the White liberal to go home, a message which has been received with mixed bitterness and relief but with little sense of what to do once one got there. Here, then, is a job which needs to be done at home and can only be done there. Political reaction is, in the final analysis, what shapes the fate of nations. The church has a distinctive institutional competence to deal with it.

Our case for parish churches dealing with themselves as a form of political action is strengthened as we look at the state of those parishes today. The parish today is different than it was five or ten years ago--a fact worth noting only because images formed five and ten years ago still inform most contemporary speculation about the church.

What we want to say about the contemporary state of the parish can be summarized in three propositions, each of which will be elaborated and explained. (1) The parish church is the most diverse voluntary association in America today; in this development it has paralleled the growing diversity of the suburbs. (2) This condition should be understood, strengthened and used--not inadvertently threatened and denigrated--towards the purposes of urban ministry. (3) As these propositions become manifest in perspectives and programs, we will be moving toward the distinctive institutional competence of the parish church in the context of "urban society."

The parish church is the most diverse voluntary association in America today. That is not an easy proposition for those who have spent the last decade or two berating the church for its stifling homogeneity and sameness. There are many whose sole image of the church is contained in the axiom that eleven o'clock on Sunday morning is the most segregated hour of the week.

But several important social forces have changed the imagery somewhat. One is the changing nature of the suburbs, the natural habitat of bland

Christian niceness. Today, in most metropolitan areas, the suburbs are more heterogeneous than the central cities. Migration patterns of the last few years have outdated the image of suburbia as the fortress of the educated WASP. Today, the suburbs are also the homes of blue-collar sons of immigrant grandparents and great grandparents; the increasing Blackness of the central cities is being balanced by the ethnic patchwork of suburban populations.

The parish church, once condemned for its suburban retreat, has now had the war, or one important battle, come to it. The problems of pluralism which the parish fled in the city are now manifest in the suburbs. That much could be attested by any parent with children in a suburban high school where the interaction with other cultures, or at least views of things, is much more intense than many of those parents would like.

So the external environment of the parish is more pluralistic. But even more important is the fact that pluralism is also the order of the day inside the congregation. It would be nice to be able to claim that the church had produced this pluralism by opening its doors to difference, but such is not the case. Yet what has happened has consequences even more profound. For the diversity of the church today results from the internal shattering of White middle-class culture. The church's homogeneity has been disrupted, not from without, but from within.

We do not claim that this constitutes social progress. It would, perhaps, be better if we had a world in which all sub-cultures, WASP included, could retain their identity yet interact as justice demanded and they chose. The breakdown of White middle-class culture is not necessarily a point for "our side." Indeed, it may have produced a dangerous number of anxious-to-sullen people whose political portents are grave. But the breakdown of bourgeois culture is a fact, one that has substantially altered the inner contours of the parish church in ways not many are aware of and very few have acted upon.

The signs of this breakdown are several, ranging from the intimate and familial to the cultural. One is the relations of "fathers and sons." The "generation gap" has always been with us, is a modern myth, and all that. But it is nonetheless true, we think, that the sons and daughters have access to more highly differentiated cultures, or pieces of culture, than the fathers did in their day as sons. And it is the sons and daughters of the middle class who, more than any others, have availed themselves of these cultural options.

Time was when the White middle class, especially the WASP, was the normative image of American man. This was the basic assumption of the "melting pot," for the WASP was the mold into which all that molten humanity was to be poured. Today, the fire under the melting pot has been turned off, probably once and for all. Persons who are not White, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant have found themselves and can celebrate their differences.

This, then, has made the White middle class one group among many instead of the normative group among all. And therein lies one cause of the breakdown of middle-class culture. For once that culture lost its normative quality, it became possible for persons who once identified with it automatically to cast about for better options. But an even more powerful cause of this breakdown is the guilt which has descended upon the middle class, especially the young, over its historic subjugation of other cultures. Like most guilt, it has led to a renunciation of one's natural place and a tendency to identify with the victims. Both reactions have caused a deep fracturing of the bourgeois monolith.

The state of the parish is described not only in terms of diversity and fragmentation, but also in terms of weariness and frustration. And these factors, in turn, have led to a deepening of the natural privatization of American middle-class life. This is a private life which is cultivated not as a good in itself, but as a retreat from the fearsome dimensions of the public realm. And therein lies its explosive potential.

For the public realm is inescapable in a technological society; no matter how deeply one digs into private meaning, one's life is still impinged upon by public forces. When people push deeper and deeper into privatism, seeking escape but finding none, they must finally burst out onto the public scene with irrationality and dangerous power.

Weariness, frustration and the consequent privatism; these things have sources multiple and complex. But one in particular intrigues us for it is aided and abetted by so much of the church's social action. We refer to the "scale" with which we define and pose social problems, a scale which is typically so far beyond the human reach that weariness and frustration are the only conceivable conclusions--even if the initial reaction is a burst of liberal optimism and energy. Envision a man's social location charted as a series of concentric circles; in the middle stands the individual, next comes the family, then the neighborhood, the work community, the city, the state, the country, the world. It is almost as if there has been a conspiracy in this country to so fixate people's attention on the outer circles, where they can "do nothing," that their own confidence and capacity for working on the inner circles is destroyed. If one wanted to politically disarm a people, one could do no better than to make demands so far beyond human scale that, failing to achieve them, the people would lapse into a political semi-coma. Is this not what the church does when, as we heard the other day, it claims that the local congregation must solve the problems of "militarism, racism and cynicism"?

In all of these regards the church, even in its odious suburban captivity, has become a microcosm of a society which is also deeply fractured. We do not typically see it that way. Normally, we understand the church as a special group, unrepresentative (for better or for worse) of the society as a whole. But the splintering of bourgeois culture and the onset of ennui have made the parish a model--and our responses to its problems could be a model as well. The church has opportunities, that is, to show how a fragmented and tired society might hold itself together.

Thus far, most congregations have held together simply by failing to face the problem of diversity, by keeping their differences under cover. Those churches which have confronted their differences may no longer qualify as heterogeneous, for their confrontations often took place in such abrasive ways that the minority was driven out and only the like-minded remained. The paradox is that the most "backward" churches, those which have ignored the basic facts of their lives, may be in the best position today to help a fragmented society work out its salvation; perhaps, indeed, the last shall be first.

Those churches that have driven members out have come to be defined around political and social criteria rather than tests of faith. This, in our terms, violates the distinctive institutional competence of the church and is an error we must avoid if the "backward" churches are now to step forward. For these churches still have a chance of developing cohesion around underlying commitments of faith which secure a broad area for disagreement about other matters. It is precisely this structure of belief and dissent that the wider society must emulate if it is to stay together.

If this is our diagnosis, what is our prescription? The precise chemistry of our prescriptions, and the research that went into them, is described in several other pamphlets in this series, especially the ones on Action-Research, The Institute for Public Life, and "Development" as Ministry. So what we say here is simply by way of short-hand; readers who find their interest piqued are referred to the other essays.

. Typically, the ecclesiastical prescription for the ills of the laity involves more "information" and better "communication." But this prescription presupposes that the problem is one of knowledge and its dissemination. What if we conclude, instead, that the problem is one of power and powerlessness? Then information and communication, while remaining helpful, become something less than a full and adequate model.

Let us take, for example, the pitch often made by church agencies concerned with higher education: if we could only get people in the parishes to "understand" what is happening on campus, then their reactions would be more moderate, their roles as taxpayers acted out more responsibly, etc. But can we not make the case that these people already "understand" what has been happening on campus; at least they understand it, correctly, to be a profound threat to their life-styles and vested interests. Thus the problem is not one of communication but of power and powerlessness. That is, the "power" of something like the movement on campus becomes frightful in direct proportion to one's own sense of powerlessness. And the religious bourgeoisie are no more "in power" than the American minorities. It is a fact that the system has worked well for the bourgeoisie and not for the minorities, but not because they somehow "ran" it. And now the system is not working well for them either, and in consequence their own sense of powerlessness is growing.

How can the church address these inner problems of the church-related middle class? What is the distinctive inner mission of the church, without which no outer mission is going to be performed? We suggest that the parish church must address itself to the quality of middle-class life, and it must do so in terms of power. Such a mission, we assert, is an integral part of any movement for justice for the non-middle class.

One reservoir of power in the lives of the church-related middle class is to be found in religious language and religious symbolism. We suggest that these people can be empowered if the church helps them understand socio-political issues in religious-symbolic terms.

Such a recommendation must sound a dull thud with those who are convinced that (a) the middle class is not even incidentally religious and (b) religious symbolism is dead. But these propositions, which have been the liberal social-science stock-in-trade for the last decade, need careful, and skeptical, scrutiny. How do we explain the persistence of church membership in this society if not in partially religious terms? Social status?

Hardly in 1970. Sheer conviviality? Compelling for some but not for a large majority. Intellectual stimulation? Not likely.

May we make bold to suggest that certain simple religious concerns or questions lie at the heart of much church membership? Questions of meaning, of depth, of thankfulness, of life and death. And may we further suggest that people find some satisfaction in the response of religious language and religious symbolism to these questions?

Not all of this has been apparent to observers of the church during the past decade, for at least two reasons. First, the fad among the observers was to see everything in terms of secularism, middle-class mendacity, and simple inertia. Second, within the church the tendency has been to relinquish theological discourse on behalf of popularized versions of psychology, sociology and political science. We have now a whole generation of clergymen who can speak as social scientists might speak, but who cannot function as theologians. This, we suggest, is a dereliction of the church's distinctive institutional competence.

Let us sketch a brief case history which will give some flesh to our concern that socio-political issues be interpreted in religious-symbolic terms, thus empowering people for social movement. We have in mind a small and dying church located in a university community. The median age in this congregation was approaching sixty-five; it was clear that the university town, whose ethos created fear and hatred in the parishioners, would not replenish the congregation's ranks; and so, a closing was imminent. In that closing substantial assets would have to be liquidated, and the pressing question--especially given the ministerial needs of the university--was how would those assets be used? If the congregation retained tight control over their wealth, none of those university needs would be met; indeed, it seemed likely that various forms of anti-university endeavors would be supported. If, on the other hand, the assets were given up for general debate within the regional judicatory the obvious needs of the university might somehow be met. And the congregation knew this.

A minister was brought in with the specific charge to close down the church. He decided to do so not by performing the prescribed legalisms, but by trying to interpret the situation to the parishioners in theological terms. He began preaching and counselling on death--not the death of individuals, though this was obviously implied, but the death of the congregation. He asked whether the congregation would like to die a bureaucratic, legalistic death (typing everything up according to their own judgments) or a trusting Christian death (giving themselves over to the grace and will of God). The end result was the congregation opted for the latter course. Its assets went to the church at large, and considerable portions of them are now supporting ministries in the university which the parishioners could not give assent to.

That is, the final action went against their better judgment. No amount of rational argumentation could have brought this result, for argumentation is aimed at "better judgment" and that seldom changes. But an approach to the problem through religious symbolism which transcended mere judgment was capable of creating change.

It is, of course, possible to read this as a slick piece of cynical manipulation. That is a difficult charge to answer, since it brings motivation into question. But it should be pointed out that the leader genuinely believed in the symbols he was using, and so, obviously, did the people. Within a common belief system such as that, it is not easy to decide that someone is being manipulated. It is obvious, however, that in this case the leader penetrated to a point of fundamental common belief, rather than working exclusively with attitudes and opinions which inevitably vary even in communities of common belief.

The story of this one church is appropriate not only for its illustration of the power of religious symbolism, but also for its demonstration of another kind of empowerment that church people critically need: empowerment for coping with change.

Again we suggest, lest the point get lost, that the distinctive institutional competence of the church may not be change-agentry so much as enabling people who will never make change to live with the change that gets made for them. A great deal of research and experience suggests that the church is filled with people of precisely that type. In the pamphlet on the Institute for Public Life we have sketched out a rather complete curriculum for dealing with this problem, and we will not repeat it here. Suffice it to say that this problem demands quick and persistent attention.

Finally, on this matter of "inner tactics" which seem necessary before "outer missions" can be strengthened, let us mention the problem of improving the quality of suburban middle-class life. That topic will come as some surprise to those whose social conscience has been fixed on the non-suburban problems of poverty, crime and other inner-city ills. But clearly there is a relationship, and the whole purpose of thinking about "inner missions" in conjunction with "outer missions" is to demonstrate connections between the two.

The church's social action has been insensitive, by and large, to the ways in which the life conditions of the middle class tend to breed the injustices which the middle class then perpetrates on those in lower social strata. We have had a simple-minded notion that the middle class had it good, the lower classes had it bad, and the objective was to redress the imbalance. But more recent looks at the problem have led to more subtle insight. For this society has diminished the lives of many people, and the middle class has not been immune from that. "White racism" is one of the phenomena which grows out of this diminishment of middle-class lives, for it is a perspective from which one always has inferiors, a perspective from which one can claim of others the same frantic scrabble for scarce resources that has consumed the bulk of one's own life-energies.

This is not the place, nor do we have the space, to enunciate the particulars of "improving the quality of life" in the suburbs. But a general principle can be proposed: there is a great need here, as elsewhere, to think in terms of micro-projects, human scale activities, instead of utopian word-schemes for reforming suburbia. An illustration. In a seminar sponsored by the Institute for Public Life, a dozen members from a particular suburban church spent time analyzing the essential loneliness and isolation of the suburbs. They concluded that this lack of relation with one another was one of the conditions that made racism and general authoritarianism more likely: when people live in supportive community, they are less likely to be brittle in their reactions to change and difference. So far, word-schemes. But pressed to do so, they boiled this insight (new for them) down into a church clearinghouse for human resources within the parish. Now, every three months, this church publishes a directory which lists things people want to do involving other people, and the exchange goes on. A small chip at a massive problem, to be sure. But more than exhortation.

The key problem here is one of perspective and understanding. For most churchmen who incline toward social action are not especially sympathetic to activities aimed at improving things for those already privileged. It sounds like a cop-out or a false sense of where the greatest needs exist. It is this mentality that has shaped the church's social action for over a decade, and only if one thinks that decade has borne rich fruit can one rest easy with the mentality.

There are two responses we would make. First, our approach to social action must recognize the systemic nature of social problems, and we must resist the temptation to treat only the dramatic and visible symptoms. We must also seek root causes, which often leads us back to ourselves. The doctor who responds to a pain in your foot by prescribing for problems in the uric acid may seem to be making a far-fetched connection; but he is probably a better doctor than the one who wants to amputate.

Second, we must stop framing complex problems in social action in terms of simplistic, rigid "priorities." Not only does this approach falsify many social problems and their multi-causal nature, it also limits recruitment for action on that problem. Since problems are pluralistic and peoples' interests are also, why do we truncate both problem and people by prescribing "the" way in which action must move?

Having discussed the parish's "inner mission," we turn now to some comments about the "outer mission." We are particularly interested here in ways in which parish and university could combine resources to mount joint efforts on the problems of urban life. We believe that one of the best ways to do so involves the use of action-research, with the assistance of university experts, on the distribution of power in the metropolis and in the university. Another pamphlet in this series details a program of action-research and its underlying rationale, so we will not duplicate that here. Let us rather suggest some of our expectations for such a venture.

To begin with, the level of understanding in most parishes about matters urban is quite low--especially when one defines urban, as we do, in terms of power. Parishioners will not be brought to face the realities or urban power by sermonizing and exhortation; nor will they engage in action programs premised on those realities when they fail to grant the premise. But programs of simple, collective inquiry which demonstrate the presence and use of power--these are programs which begin, we think, where parishioners in the main are.

Second, a program such as this can be an exercise in self-understanding for parishioners; in examining the arrangement of power in their metropolis, they may come to a much more realistic picture of the power they do and do not have. In this sense, this program is a continuation of our emphasis on the inner mission, and at a particularly important point.

Third, the capacity to understand and utilize power in city or university is crucial to "doing things" in either of those contexts. There is a pressing need, as we suggest at length in our pamphlet on the university, to "urbanize" higher education. A few churches in university towns, and some of the national agencies, have even been active in this effort. But almost invariably their activity consists in conceptualizing the ideal urban curriculum and then exhorting the academy to adopt it. Such efforts are a waste of time, for they are not responsive to the facts of power in the university; they do not recognize the stranglehold exerted by academic guilds and their local manifestations, departments, on the shaping of university life. They continue to act as if the university were a creation of pure idea, responsive to its own kind.

It will not be easy to get the church to recognize, let alone deal with, the power dimension of the university. Indeed, it will not be easy to get parishioners to take a genuinely critical look at the institution on which they and their children's hopes have been pinned. But if neither of these first steps can be accomplished, there is no sense in plunging into "action" programs as if they would make any difference. A program of action-research on the problem of power in university and city has at least the potential for enabling these initial steps to be taken.

What we say for the university is clearly applicable to the city. The parish's response to urban ills typically sidesteps the problem of power, sometimes because of fear, sometimes because of ignorance. A program of action-research can speak to both conditions; to ignorance by providing knowledge, to fear by providing encounters with power in which the layman has the parity of competence.

Again it is important, once a power analysis is completed, not to let people flounder in the magnitude of the problem. There are human-scale responses to the problems of urban power. For example, the parish could organize its own "system of influence" by building a network of

parishioners in power or with access to power who could be more than normally responsive to cases that come to the parish's attention--an idea that is elaborated in our essay on "development." The key point, once more, is that the church educate people to an understanding of the importance of such responses. Action-research is one way to conduct this education.

Finally, out of action-research we would expect concrete, responsive programs to grow. The whole process of action-research leads in this direction, largely because it empowers people, gives them competence and confidence, to develop positive programs that would otherwise have floundered on feelings of impotence.

Much of what we have said about the inner and outer missions of the parish is simply a prelude, not only to our essay on action-research, but also to the pamphlet on the "Institute for Public Life." The Institute is, at bottom, the institutionalization, in the parish context, of many of the themes we have pursued here. It is a concrete embodiment of church-university interaction on urban problems, and a way of bringing "human scale" to our own recommendations. Interested readers are referred to these two pieces for a continuation of this discussion.

III. SPECIALIZED MINISTRIES: CAMPUS AND URBAN

Our special pleading for the parish will probably not be appreciated by those engaged in the non-parish ministries of the church, especially the campus and urban ministries. Today especially, these efforts are on hard times, and the feeling is widespread among their practitioners that the church simply does not understand or even recognize its specialized ministries.

While we agree with the facts, we diverge in our interpretation. These are hard times for the specialized ministries, and the parish church (as the source of all fiscal stability) is involved. But it is not because the church ignores its non-parish ministries so much as the fact that those ministries tend to ignore the parish. To put this in terms of our central concept, we would suggest that both campus and urban ministries have failed to cultivate their base of power in the parish and are now suffering the consequences. Or, more accurately, they are now suffering in a particularly visible way; we would argue that their work has suffered in less obvious ways for some considerable time.

There are notable exceptions, but the typical situation of the specialized minister is one of institutional isolation. This is especially true of campus ministers in whose situation, perhaps, the realities of power have been easier to evade, especially with student fads masquerading as power being available for escape. The work context of the urban minister has made it more difficult to evade the problem of power, although the escape into social case work is available there.

Typically, the campus minister is neither a part of the church nor a part of the university. He does not serve, and he is not served by, a parish; indeed, to the extent that he has identified with his student constituents he may be positively alienated from parishioners and vice

versa. By the same token, he is not a part of the university faculty or administration (with the exception to the latter being the fairly frequent liaison with "student life" administrators, whose power is exceeded only by that of the home economics department). This situation is so widespread that it has been formalized and celebrated in the literature and folklore of campus ministry: it is known as the "marginality" of the campus minister. Marginality is celebrated because, the argument goes, it is the no-man's land in which the prophet operates. The campus minister should revel in the fact that he is beholden to no institution, for in that loneliness also lies freedom.

As the current crisis has revealed, however, this marginality is highly dependent on the largesse of the church and the noblesse of the university. If a vocation were truly marginal it would flourish quite without regard to the attitudes and actions of the institutions whose margins it occupied: that is the definition, we should suppose, of marginality. After all, guerilla fighters do not seek basic funding from the regular army. That the campus ministry has been marginal only in appearance and not in essence or function is one of the important revelations in what is happening today. Important because it helps us understand the problem of power as a key source of the historic malaise of this ministry. And as we have emphasized throughout, no ministry will be "urban" or even urban-relevant until this basic issue is addressed and resolved.

The urban minister has had fewer problems of identity and function perhaps, as we have suggested, because his arena of operation has yielded to fewer illusions about the nature and source of power. In most universities, the mass and energy of students have led to the assumption that even some mystical, personal identification with their ethos was a conduit for power. And the student mentality, for obvious reasons, has been so transitory and sometimes random, that it has not always been easy to see that very little power was being released this way. Only those

who have pierced through the university "front" to see the fundamental role of national and international misuses of power have been able to get a good grip on power in the university context.

The urban minister, we suggest, has been closer to such bedrock realities in his daily work. There is nothing transitory or random about the consciousness of Blacks, the poor and the desperate. There is no easy assumption that such-and-such a problem has been solved simply because it is no longer faddish to discuss it. We do not suggest that because of this the urban ministry has been preeminently successful in the isolation and use of power; simply that he has tended to be more mindful and realistic about the problem than his campus counterpart.

The most important direction in which this argument takes us leads back to the parish. For both campus and urban ministries are dependent upon the parish for their wherewithal; even more, the parish is the only natural reservoir either campus or urban ministries have for other kinds of power. We refer to the power of mass-based organization, the power of particular persons, the power of moral outrage and theological judgment, the power of institutional legitimacy and the power of money.

Both campus and urban ministries need to maintain much closer touch with their parish constituents; indeed, they need to regard them as constituents to begin with. Both ministries need to develop forms of inner mission (to the parish) which will supplement and support forms of outer mission. The problems facing campus and urban ministries have their microcosms, their counterparts, their partial solutions in the parishes. It makes little sense to pretend that the work always lies somewhere else, when the parish--no matter how distasteful it may be to the marginal prophet--is the nexus of American life which it is today.

Both campus and urban ministries could begin this process by encouraging and helping develop programs of action-research in the univer-

sity and the city as described above. This is not the only way, but it is one way, a way we have tested and have confidence in. Through the means of action-research, parishioners will be able to educate themselves about the realities which campus and urban ministers face daily. The tensions that exist between parishioners and specialized ministers result in part from the enormous experiential gaps between work-a-day middle-class life and the normal experiences of the campus or urban worker. Thus, instincts and strategies which come naturally to the specialized ministries are regarded as insane by parishioners, whose normal experience permits of no other conclusion. Action-research provides one vehicle for bridging this experience gap.

Action-research also provides a way of mobilizing collective support for the campus or urban minister around some manageable aspect of his work to which parishioners can relate. In a critical parish, the presence of even a small group of informed, supportive laymen can be of inestimable value to the specialized minister when one of those inevitable "crunches" comes in his work.

We believe that his concern for the parish relations of campus and urban ministers has logical and important implications for the training of these people. For the standard training process, particularly in the case of campus ministers, takes place in universities whose life is totally out of touch with the lives of the parish and its people. The habits bred by training in this kind of isolation persist throughout professional careers, with the unfortunate consequences we have already suggested.

In the essay on the Institute for Public Life we have spelled out a parish-based program which, among other things, has the capacity to serve as a training ground for specialized ministries. In fact, our own Institute will, this Fall, become the training base for one of the recipients of a Danforth Campus Ministry grant. If the agencies which place these professionals can get over their obsession with "academic accreditation"

and concentrate instead on the development of competence to perform the job, perhaps instances such as this will multiply. If they do not, relations between the specialized ministries and their sources of parish power will deteriorate completely.

One of our most persistent findings in the area of specialized ministries was the extent to which campus and urban ministers work out of relation to one another. Given the focus of this project, it was natural for us to seek out such relations. But the best we could find were some campus ministries making significant efforts at deploying university resources towards urban problems--notably the work of the University Program in Science and Society, North Carolina, and that of the Ecumenical Campus Ministry in St. Louis. We were simply unable to locate any solid instance in which urban and campus ministers, with their different operational bases, had made fruitful cooperative arrangements.

It would be foolish to assume that this lack of coordination is always bad and if only we could combine efforts things would be better. There are doubtless places, perhaps many, where the energy required for cooperation would sap vitalities which should be applied to work; and other places where there is no real work to be done by urban and campus ministers anyway.

Even more pertinent, the factors causing this separation of functions may run so deep that no bridging of the gap is possible. We need to understand those factors to test this possibility. Structurally, the church bureaucracies reinforce the separation of urban and campus ministries. Since these divisions are, by now, well-established domains, it may simply be a counsel of perfection to suggest that they come together in some form of administrative coordination. And, again, there is no guarantee that such coordination would produce anything of merit beyond its own existence.

There are probably individual or psychological factors behind the separation of urban and campus ministries. It is likely, we think, that the two ministries recruit selectively from different personality types. And it is also likely that the nature of the work itself reinforces these personality differences over time.

Finally, we might suggest that existence of theological differences between urban and campus ministries; differences which are not as ephemeral as theology sometimes is, but which parallel and undergird the psychological and sociological differences we have noted.

We have not described these differences in any detail because to do so would be to imply value judgments which are beside the point for the moment. The point is that differences do exist, to the point that we must question the potential of efforts to unite these two specialized ministries.

And the question runs deeper yet. We suggest that the apparent logic of bringing campus and urban ministries together out of concern for "the church, the university and urban society" may not be so logical at all. Perhaps the work to be done under this heading will have to be done by other parts of the church in quite different combinations and permutations. We need to be open to the possibility that we have organized and arranged our institutions along quite different lines than the world is wont to present its problems. Just because we have ministries named "campus" and "urban" does not mean that they are necessarily the sole or even prime locus of the work to be done in this arena.

We are not recommending the abandonment of the specialized ministries. We are, however, stressing the primacy of the parish, both from a pragmatic, power-oriented viewpoint and from the vantage of our normative model. Much of the "campus" and "urban" kinds of work must be done in the parish. For the sake of that work, and for the sake of their own viability, both campus and urban ministries must make renewed efforts in that direction.

IV. NATIONAL OFFICES AND AGENCIES

If the specialized ministries are standing today in some kind of limbo, they have company in the executives of national offices and agencies. These ranks, too, are being thinned by budget and staff cuts; and here, too, one finds the corresponding malaise over the nature of the work, a profound sense of lost direction.

Part of the problem of national offices stems from the growing sense of localism, not only in the church but throughout the country's institutions. In a society the size and complexity of ours, it is little wonder that the tide is turning against centralization, moving instead toward local "ownership" and autonomy in a wide range of activities. Centralized administration of activities flung across the country does not permit of human scale, and for this reason alone (to say nothing about problems of resources and technology) centralization is in real jeopardy.

Within the church, there is widespread recognition of this movement toward localism. We have found very little misunderstanding of the fact that mandates from on high are no longer the order of the day. But with that fact well in hand, the offices and agencies capable of responding creatively to it are few and far between.

At least two kinds of responses are being made. The first involves some sort of "national ministry"; the second, the role of "facilitator."

The notion of a national ministry is premised on the idea that localism is only one "level" of a society's life; that there is also a "national level" even though it may be in the process of redefinition and delimitation by the new localism. But no matter how far that new localism goes, the argument runs, there will always be functions that can only be performed nationally and thus a need for "ministry" at that level.

We will ignore that weasel word "ministry" for a moment; it clearly has such ambiguity and latitude that we cannot be certain what job is envisioned. The more basic problem, no matter what job is meant by "ministry," is again a problem of power. Influence can be wielded on the national level only by those who can summon some kind of support from a collection of local bases. We still have a kind of federalism in this country, but the notion that there is a national level operationally distinct from the congeries of local outposts is a perversion of the federal theory. There are, of course, powers that work on the national level without any visible mandate from the localities: the Department of Defense may be one example. But it is not apparent that the church has the kinds of power necessary to engage D.O.D. on its own terms. The church may have to fight its battles with more traditional, and legitimate, powers.

What, then, is the potential source of power for a national office or agency of the church? The more self-conscious lobbying activities of the church are clear on the answer to this question: their power lies in the voices around the land whom they can rally on behalf of a cause. But when we move from the realm of self-sconscious church lobbies to those who imagine some "national ministry" in an abstract framework, the linkages to power become more tenuous. Indeed, in many cases there simply is no power at all any more. The power of the dollar has largely reversed hands--from national to local. The power of pronouncement and persuasion is held by the church in no greater measure than many other organizations with mass memberships. And the status and prestige which once gave national officers leverage on the local scene has all but disappeared; instead, they are viewed as bureaucratic vampires trying to bleed the local church dry.

Unless a national office is capable of cultivating solid local support, it seems to us that all talk of a disembodied "national ministry" is meaningless. There is certainly no <u>political</u> approach the church can make to national structures that is not rooted in local constituencies--

unless, of course, that approach is one of uncritical approval. There may have been a time when the threat of a national office lining up church-wide support would have sufficed to help move a decision or implement a polity. But that time, too, has passed, as politicians have witnessed the church's impotence to carry out such an act.

All these impasses, and more, have led quite naturally to the theory that national offices and agencies ought to play the "facilitator" role. Cast in our terms of power, this theory recognizes the power that exists at the local level, at least in the form of the raw ingredients. It suggests that sometimes a catalyst is needed to bring these ingredients together in an energy-releasing mix. The catalyst itself need not have power, per se, but simply the capacity to combine elements which might create the power reaction.

The facilitator theory itself is of considerable interest to us, simply because it is predicated on a realistic view of the distribution of power between national and local manifestations of the church. But the ways in which the theory have been implemented leave one a good deal less enthusiastic. Too often, national officers have had only to possess a large travel budget to prove that they were facilitators. What they did on the local scene, what results their activities produced, these seemed irrelevant. And it was just as well. For what they did on the local scene could generally be labelled mere talk. They would chat with the various parties to a dispute and suggest to each of them how the difference could be resolved, always wondering how tensions could have gotten so high when each party seemed so amiable taken alone. They would hold conferences and consultations to stimulate people's thinking, and wonder why so little of that thinking ever got translated into the participants' work lives.

We have written this in the past tense on the assumption that the day is gone when such non-jobs were tolerated on any large scale. For the fact

is that the national office and agency, having been ripped out of the context of real work, has had to design and rationalize an elaborate set of non-jobs. The fact that these non-jobs have, on occasion, been enthusiastically received by local operatives makes them no more real. It only points to the way unreality breeds unreality.

But if that day is gone, few new models of national operation have surfaced. In this project, we have been pushing one such model in particular. We call it the "developmental" approach; it involves the use of national styles of movement for the purpose of generating legitimacy and financial support for local operations. Since we have devoted another pamphlet in this series to the developmental model, we will say no more about it here.

Other models intrigue us, too. One way to root the national office more solidly in local work would be to relate those offices systematically to particular localities for given periods of time. In this way, spending half their time for a year on a given local situation, people operating at the national level might be able to deliver directly to a series of local situations over time, as well as learning styles of operation which would make them more meaningful to other localities.

One aspect of such a plan has some special interest for us. Many national agencies now have boards composed of people from locations across the country. The diffuse composition of these boards, and the resulting random demands they put on the agencies, serve only to exacerbate the natural pathologies of the national operation. Suppose we abandoned these national collections of "heads" and superstars, and replaced them with a collection of people from a particular locality who would serve as the Board for a specified period--say one or two years. Then the Board would be recomposed of a similar collection from another locality.

Several good things might follow in the wake of such a change. The national office would be kept in close touch with the ebb and flow of a

local situation which would enrich its own work. The national office could serve the local situation by creating an ongoing conversation between people, or types of people, who seldom see (or refuse to see) each other on the local scene. The advice these people dispensed at the Board meetings would not be cheap, since they would all return home that night and might get their bluff called the next day by a fellow Board member. If such a structure were adopted, the facilitator role could really be played instead of played at.

There is, of course, an even better way for the national agency to be rooted in local work; and that is for it to be doing some local work of its own. Yes, that would take away time from the national operation. But time is not the only scarce resource we have to be concerned about. Quality of insight and application is another. And these might be increased, not lessened, by a scheme which had national agents working out of some local situation of their own. Presumably such a situation would stand as a national model or testing ground. It would, at very least, help to keep the rhetoric down.

All of these are ways in which the power of national offices and agencies might be enhanced, and the widening gap between national and local closed up. We believe that such needs exist, and it is urgent that we address ourselves to them. For as it stands the resources of the church are being squandered, and its natural and healthy pluralism is changing to fragmentation and divisiveness.

V. THE SEMINARY

We have said a good deal about American Christianity and its professional practitioners. If even a small percentage of our claims are true, there are implications therein for the seminary, far and away the prime training ground for professional church leadership.

In the course of this project we have worked closely with a new seminary in the making, directed by Dr. John Fletcher under the auspices of the Metropolitan Ecumenical Training Center of Washington, D. C. The new seminary--now called Interfaith Associates in Metropolitan Theological Education (Intermet)--is premised on the assumption that the old seminaries have not been preparing men for ministry, especially the parish ministry, in an urban context. The old seminaries have divorced study from work so throughly that there is no conceivable way to bring them back into relations of mutual enrichment--except by starting over. And that is what Intermet is doing.

In the course of this project, we contemplated the possibility of turning the theory of power on the seminaries themselves. As we have found throughout the "pieces" of the church, the seminaries have proceeded in considerable independence from the local parish. Surely, we supposed, the problems parishes experience with new clergy (so many of whom, by their own testimony, need occupational retraining almost immediately upon leaving seminary)--surely these problems would provide the base for a parish campaign directed at seminary education.

We are no longer sure that is true. The role of the minister in the local parish is still covered and protected to some extent by a mystique (and occasional superstition) in the lay mind (which clergy sometimes cultivate for their self-protection). There is even more of that with regards to the seminaries as institutions, which most laymen seem to understand scarcely at all. If there is dissatisfaction with the way ministers

perform, it is not conscious enough, nor is it closely enough linked with perceptions of the seminary, to provide the sort of reform movement we had speculated upon.

But a new start such as that taken by Internet is something else. The total program of the new seminary is much too elaborate for discussion here, but several elements directly related to the themes of this project deserve mention. For this new seminary, as one of its prime objectives, is committed to training ministers in such a way that they understand and can cope with the realities of urban power.

For any professional, the job is the critical arena for the exercise of power. Within the work context, the professional must understand the dynamics of power if he is to function with any degree of effectiveness. And the work arena is the prime "staging area" for any power the professional may wish to exercise on the larger society.

The Platonic traditions of education generally have deprived most professionals of self-conscious experience with power. But the ministry has been particularly thus afflicted. Neophyte professors and doctors are, at least, trained within the same contexts in which they will eventually operate--the university and the hospital or clinic. In this way they osmotically absorb lessons about power. But the training of the minister goes on in an academic institution which bears scarcely any resemblance to the structure and ethos of the parish. It is only after several trying years in the parish that the typical clergyman begins to perceive the principalities and powers at work there. Meanwhile, his work has been ineffective and his own frustrations have begun to lead him away from the profession.

Ministerial training in Internet is always rooted in the parish context; no student, at any time in his education, will be without a full-time parish assignment around which all the rest of his learning revolves.

The key question being probed by Internet is whether all of the theological disciplines can be taught under field conditions; whether all theological learning can be made responsive to the basic problems of vocation.

To pursue this kind of learning, Internet has devised several mechanisms. The student will have an on-the-job committee consisting of the head pastor and several laymen from his parish. He will have a continuing seminar with a small group of Internet students in which various persons skilled in interpersonal dealings are called upon for leadership. The students will also cluster together around particular areas of academic interest and draw on "preceptors" from throughout the metropolitan area, preceptors whose authority to teach does not lie solely in the possession of a credential.

In what way will this educational machinery guarantee learning about power? There are no guarantees, but the possibilities are numerous. The student has to negotiate for virtually all his education; e.g., in contracting with preceptors. In this process he (and the preceptors!) will necessarily learn something about power which is not learned when curricula are determined a priori and selected in line with "requirements." The student's intervention into parish life, particularly in the form of his on-the-job committee, will be an experience in power. This will come not only in relation to laymen for whom the student's ministry may or may not be acceptable; it will also come in relation to the head minister whose lines the student may be fouling or strengthening. Lessons about power will come again as the student begins to probe the human resources of the metropolitan area in an effort to piece together the best possible educational program for him. For in this case, the best possible educational program means one that helps him do his job well, and the line between cognitive exercise and politics becomes very thin indeed.

The Internet student will learn about power because he is responsible for his own education just as the professional is responsible for his own

work. He will have to deal from existing strengths and develop strengths where none exist. He will learn in contexts where real rewards and sanctions are at stake; i.e., contexts where power is at work. Since these are the same contexts in which his professional life is to be lived out, the chances that the student will become adept at dealing with problems of power in the parish seem greater than in the normal, isolated seminary setting.

A voluntary association such as the church depends, more than we might like to think, on a classic concept of "leadership." And that must come in some substantial measure from the clergy. To the extent that leaders are unclear about power--their own and others'--to that extent will they fail to be leaders at all. And thus we come full circle in our argument. The church will have only a marginal role in urban society (and, secondarily, in shaping an urban-relevant university) if leadership is lacking at this point. This is especially pressing in the parish context, for it is only on that level that power throughout the church can be gounded and mobilized. The seminaries have a critical role to play in producing clerical leaders skillful in the analysis and use of power. In this regard, Intermet strikes us as being a pivotal experiment. Sadly, that experiment is being replicated at few other places in the country. For this reason especially we wish Intermet well.

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